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SUBJECT: EIGHT DAYS TILL "E-DAY" - THE LATEST ON  
OBSERVER COVERAGE AND STATEMENTS

REF: KABUL 1679

11. (SBU) At the Aug. 11 U.S.-chaired International Observer Secretariat, representatives of 10 embassies, ISAF, UNAMA, UNDP-ELECT, and five observer missions, including the domestic entity FEFA, had a final exchange on common challenges in security, deployment, and reporting.

UNDP Urges Caution in Reporting  
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12. (SBU) UNDP-ELECT briefed that its security team (UNDSS) predicts a dip in violent activity on election day, and a rising chance of protests and civil disturbances in the days following August 20. In the context of this threat, UNDP-Elect's Margie Cook urged observers to exercise caution over the content and timing of their messages so as not to provide a "false image" of elections that candidates might exploit for their own purposes before the vote is certified. She urged observer groups to stagger their messaging, to carefully consider the timing of releases, and to allow the voice of domestic observers to be the primary voice of observation. FEFA, the domestic observer organization, said it would report on its field operations (i.e. number and location of observers) before and on election day "as a deterrent," but that it would not report its observations until later. Note: the Embassy is considering convening a meeting of the USG-funded observer organizations (IRI, Democracy International, NDI, and ANFREL) on August 21 to coordinate timing of messages and to share messages on a voluntary basis. We will also attempt to trade details messages with the EU Observer Mission on the same day. End Note.

13. (SBU) Comment: The U.S. Embassy is neither coordinating nor directing the statements of U.S.-funded observer missions. We are funding four independent observer organizations, each of which will have its own unique findings. We will not filter their findings nor instruct them on what to report. These observer groups provide an additional safeguard against fraud and demonstrate the international community's support for Afghan citizens' rights to credible and inclusive elections. The Embassy will send accredited staff and Washington visitors to locations in Kabul to observe polling centers, but will not file a public and official U.S. government observer report. End Comment.

Deployments: On-the-Ground Realities  
Mean Adjusting Goals  
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14. (SBU) The Turkish Embassy announced it will field 14 observers: 2 to Wardak, 6 to Mazar, and 6 in Kabul. Stepping back from its earlier predictions, the EU announced that it will not have observers in all 34 provinces. USG-funded observers may also have to realign their geographic coverage, due to worse-than-expected lodging and logistical constraints at PRTs. (Note: Post is continuing to work this with ISAF. End note.) If these trends

continue over the next week, in most of the areas of highest threat for fraud the onus will rest solely on domestic observers and candidate agents to provide reporting on irregularities. At the moment, there is no international observer presence in Nuristan, Nimroz, or Daikondy.

¶15. (SBU) FEFA is looking into whether it will be able to observe in polling centers where security is provided by community/tribal elements, rather than ANP. UNDP-ELECT's Margie Cook said all polling stations will be run by IEC-trained officials, regardless of who guards the door. Comment: As of 12 August, IEC says that it will not staff/deliver ballots unless a polling center has ANSF security, making observation moot. End Comment.

¶16. (SBU) The International Observer Secretariat will convene a smaller group of Embassies to plot out who will visit which precincts in Kabul in order to de-conflict routes. UNAMA and OSCE will also be visiting polling stations on "E-day", although not as observers.

¶17. (SBU) Dirk Buda of the European Commission Office raised his concern that the IEC's high number of accreditations (138,806 provincial council candidate agents, and 36,509 presidential candidate agents as of 12 August) would cause clogging at polling centers. UNDP-ELECT noted that polling station workers may limit the number of agents and observers in a polling center.

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